DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 568 JC 910 252

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TITLE	Shared Governance: Promises and Perils.
INSTITUTION	Yuba Community Coll. District, Marysville, CA.
PUB DATE	May 91
NOTE	10p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrators; *College Administration; College Environment; College Faculty; Collegiality; Community Colleges; Employer Employee Relationship; *Faculty College Relationship; *Governance; Organizational Climate; *Organizational Effectiveness; *Participative Decision Making; Peer Relationship; Quality of Working Life; School Districts; *School Personnel; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Yuba College CA; *Yuba Community College District CA

ABSTRACT

Shared governance in the community college district has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the three "perils" of implementing shared governance are that the process is difficult, lengthy, and sometimes tedious; that responsibility for decisions and actions must somehow be maintained; and that an appropriate role for faculty, staff, and administrators must be established and recognized by all participating individuals. Reaching a consensus in decision making requires that all parties be adequately informed of the issues. However, disseminating such information is not always conducive to effective management. In addition, teaching and learning may become secondary priorities as representatives miss time away from work or the classroom. Finally, special interest groups may try to misuse the power of shared governance to forward their own agendas, rather than working for the good of the district. While clear perils exist, shared governance promises many rewards, including the empowerment of participants, development of collegial relationships for an improved college environment, greater understanding among employees at all levels about the issues facing their community colleges, and improved communication. The participants in shared governance decisions are more likely to support policies that they have had a role in forming and are more likely to take personal responsibility for the outcomes of such decisions. As representatives in the group decision-making process report back to constituents, college-wide communication and understanding is greatly enhanced, improving the overall college environment. (PAA)

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Patricia L. Wirth

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May 1991

SHARED GOVERNANCE: PROMISES AND PERILS

My comments about shared governance: Promises and Perils, are based upon written suggestions from some of the Yuba College participants who are leaders in shared governance and some excerpts from my 1988 review of the literature on this subject, in preparation for planning and implementation of shared governance at Yuba College.

George Shaw, Yuba's Director of Personnel/former History Instructor, shared the following comparison with me:

> In thinking about shared governance, I am always reminded of the statement by Henry Steele Commager regarding the differences between autocratic states and democracies. The gist of his statement was that autocratic states were like ocean liners which sailed majestically on their course. They always knew where they were going, and they got there in a straight line -- until they hit a rock and sank. On the other hand, democracies were like rafts. They bobbed about, people got seasick, and their feet were always wet, but they almost never sank. Even though it is not democracy, shared governance has some of the same perils and some of the same promises.

Credit is given to Yuba faculty, staff, administrators and student leaders who shared their views regarding shared governance so generously. Most of those interviewed are members of Yuba's Master Planning Committee, charged with developing a draft Shared Governance statement.

The following comments are a result of our collective thoughts and experiences, we who represent Yuba College on the subject of shared governance. It was interesting for me to note that there were many similarities regarding promises and perils among the diverse group who shared their thoughts. I will discuss the perils of shared governance first, because I want to conclude my remarks today on a positive note. Three areas of perils of shared governance follow:

Perils of Shared Governance

1. A difficult, lengthy, and sometimes tedious process;

2. The responsibility factor;

3. Recognition of the appropriate role of faculty, staff, and administrators in shared governance.

Shared governance takes a great deal of time, it is:

A difficult, lengthy, tedious process. According to the Kean College report:

> Participatory governance is a difficult, lengthy and sometimes tedious process. Consultation, discussion, negotiation, and the forging of consensus among affected parties is inherently more complex than simply issuing orders in a monarchial and authoritarian manner.

The increased number of representatives required to assure that every group is represented, makes reaching consensus very time consuming. There will be numerous iterations of the same issue, some will be due to a minor change of a word or two, but outstandingly important to the person who wanted the word changed. The dissemination of information required prior to implementation is not always conducive to effective management.

Teaching and learning may become secondary priorities. Representatives miss time away from work or the classroom. This is a major problem and creates havoc with scheduling and program/curriculum development. Some shared governance participants become more interested and involved in the coordination effort than their instructional or work assignments.

Administrators have to become teachers again, exercising great patience, giving participants time to discover and develop. Individuals and groups who formerly did not share in decision making must agree to spend sufficient time and energy learning new skills and knowledge. One faculty member reported that faculty leaders must learn to move beyond interest group leadership to institutional leadership. Individual faculty members must acquire a view or perspective broader than her/his department and must be willing to study material and data outside of their own area of interest. Classified participants report that there is a feeling that their participation may be "token." That even though they speak, their voices may not be heard or considered. Who will serve as mentors to such diverse representatives who have no previous experience, but with high expectations and great exuberance for this new process? Why, the administrators of course. Those people who already have a full load, and no extra release time for the added burden. As each new year advances, the same administrators, President, Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Student Service etc., will have a new group to mentor.

Responsibility and who will assume it is another peril of shared governance.

The responsibility factor. One classified respondent views shared governance in the following way:

> "Every right one gains brings responsibility. As a participant in the decision-making process, I bear responsibility for those decisions and am, of course, held accountable by the group I represent. Communication with the staff is another responsibility that I often have difficulty meeting."

Participants are responsible to a variety of people in addition to being responsible for their personal actions. One administrator described faculty members as making decisions without consultation with their immediate supervisor, such as to become a project/activity coordinator without first considering the impact it will have on instruction.

A faculty member reported that faculty must also be willing to live by a new democratic standard, which is particularly difficult for a mature faculty that may have experienced an authoritarian system of administration in the past, having had no opportunity to participate actively in a decision-making process, and have no experience.

Another faculty member reported that "we must guarantee that people do what they should." In our experience at Yuba College, the faculty have policed their own ranks.

Among classified staff, there is a current lack of understanding as to the purpose and procedures of shared governance. Many people misunderstand the meaning and/or function of shared governance. Some believe it to be a structure rather than what it really is, a process; a process for selecting employees; a process of affirmative action, and so on.

Overall, one of the perils in shared governance is that participants won't understand that shared governance means sharing in the development of policy and coming forward when the bricks start to fly to say, "yes, I agreed to this recommendation and here are some reasons for my decision to do so." Shared governance does not mean shared administration or management.

My third peril concerns identification of the appropriate roles in the shared governance process.

Recognition of the appropriate role of faculty, staff and administration in shared governance. One of the primary roles of the participants in the shared governance process is to consult

with the constituents that each represents. One faculty member reported:

> "It is all too easy to take advantage of the power vacuums which temporarily exist in the early stages of shared governance and impose one's own view without appropriate consultation with other faculty."

Special interest groups may try to misuse the power of shared governance to accomplish their own agendas rather than acting for the good of the district. This may occur when the committee is not representative of a variety of constituencies.

For those who view shared governance as a panacea to any morale problems among faculty, this may be an unrealistic assumption. Hersey and Blanchard address Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

> "Although participation tends to satisfy affiliation and esteem needs by giving people a chance to feel in on things and to be recognized as important in the decision-making process, it should be remembered that self-actualization may not result from participation. This high level need satisfaction most often occurs in a work environment where people are given a job that allows them an opportunity for achievement, growth, and development, and challenge... "

So, those who feel that shared governance will be a long-term morale builder for faculty and staff, should remember that this may not actually be the case, that all employees may be more satisfied in the long term after having opportunities for staff development in their primary roles of teaching, administering or other support functions.

All involved must "buy" into the program. There must be a clear understanding of the role of the participants in the process as one of making recommendations that will be considered by the Superintendent/President, or Chancellor, and the Board of Trustees. There must be open communication and a large degree of mutual trust. Mutual trust will develop over time; however, it is not generally a condition that exists at the beginning of any new process.

I feel that for every peril for shared governance, there also are many promises.

<u>Promises for Shared Governance are:</u>

1. Empowerment of participants and the resulting acceptance of responsibilities for recommendations.

2. Development of collegial relationships and an improved college environment.

3. An avenue for many college constituents to develop a greater breadth of understanding related to the issues faced by their community colleges in the 1990's.

4. Improved communications

Some promises of shared governance follow:

Empowerment of participants. Shared governance may be viewed as a process of empowerment. It is likely there will be a greater "buy in" to decisions by all parties since they have the opportunity to influence the outcome. Once the outcome is decided upon by such a diverse group of empowered individuals, assuming that every employee group on the campus will have the opportunity to be represented, they will be more likely to seek to protect what has been collectively created. The shared governance group will be more willing to accept responsibility for the final decision.

> An article published in August 1985, Excellence and Equity, A Strategic Three Year Plan for Kean College of New Jersey reported, "...as a general proposition, shared governance ...accepts the view that participation of autonomous...agents in decisions which affect them increases the likelihood that those decisions will be more effectively implemented.

Much research has been done in the past on the merit of participation in decision making. If employees are told exactly what to do and are controlled closely, they are more likely to find ways to implement personal goals rather than to work toward the goals of the entire institution. However, by being involved in the decision-making process, it is more likely that the individuals will work toward implementing their shared recommendation.

Shared governance may also lead to an overall improved college environment.

Improved college environment. Opportunities for greater involvement in the decision-making process from the earliest stages of a project through completion, and sharing meaningful input in determining the future of the college and the employee's world of work can lead to development of collegial relationships among trustees, administrators, academic employees, and staff. At Yuba, this cooperative atmosphere has carried over to other faculty and staff members and has resulted in a dramatic reduction in negative attitudes which were prevalent in previous years. Faculty members have policed their own ranks and have

ousted those individuals who continued to promote an adversarial climate from leadership roles.

Even though the shared governance process is very time consuming, both in lost work time and in teaching and reteaching the background of various issues, it results in a better understanding of the issues by a greater number of people and development of more sophistication in their thinking and decision-making abilities.

Increased breadth of understanding related to issues. Involvement in the decision-making process has alleviated much of the stigma of administration doing what "they" want done at Yuba. Some people feel that better decisions are made because of the diversity, and a broader spectrum of committee representation. Some feel that the quality of decisions arrived at in the shared governance process do not vary appreciably from those previously made by an all administrative group, but that the participants understand the issues and recognize ownership.

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard report in their book, Management of Organizational Behavior Utilizing Human Resources.

> "...the individuals in the organization...either perceive their goals as being the same as the goals of the organization or, although different, see their own goals being satisfied as a direct result of working for the goals of the organization."

It appears, at this point in time, that Shared Governance participants at Yuba are working hard and cooperatively to implement policies and procedures drafted by our Master Planning Committee.

My final promise is one of improved communication.

Communication. Communication is generally an issue in every large organization. By involving more people in the decision-making process, communication can be improved if the individuals report back to their constituents on all of the issues addressed by the shared governance group. There has to be a real commitment on the part of all of the parties involved to continually communicate the shared governance philosophy purpose and issues addressed and recommended by the people involved.

In closing, a college can emphasize the perils or emphasize the promises of shared governance. Success of shared governance is a matter of the people involved and their willingness to share in the give and take of the decision-making process. Also, the participants' willingness to take responsibility for the recommendations that are carried to the Board of Trustees, as a result of this process. It takes time, patience, and a lot of

energy to implement and support a shared governance process at a college; however, I believe that it can result in an improved college environment and less conflict in the institution.

REFERENCES:

1. Yuba College employees:

   Lorraine Ainsworth, Instructional Assistant, CSEA Representative

   John Drehobl, Student Trustee/Student Body President

   Don Ferraiuolo, Associate Dean for Applied Arts/ Representing Mid Managers

   Annette Lambson, Vice President for Instruction

   Larry Michel, Academic Senate President/Agriculture Instructor

   David Rubiales, Affirmative Action Officer/History Instructor and former State Community College CTA President. (David was one of the faculty members most involved in drafting the community college master plan.)

   Doug Shamberger, Yuba College Faculty Association President/Librarian and former Academic Senate President

   George Shaw, Director of Personnel & Human Resources and Former CTA Vice President, CA

   Liz Skelly, Accounting Supervisor

   Julie Struckmeyer, Yuba College Trustee

   Andy Suleski, Accountant

2. Reference Material:

   Management of Organizational Behavior, Utilizing Human Resources, by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, 4th Edition, published 1982 by Prentice Hall, Inc., Inglewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

   "Excellence in Equity, A Strategic Three Year Plan for Kean College of New Jersey," published by Educational Resource Information Center/ERIC, August 1985.

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